

Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network
TESTIMONY: HB 4787 and HB 4830

**Submitted to the House Criminal Justice Committee
September 22, 2015**

My name is Randy Block. I'm Director of the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network (MUSJN), a statewide network of over 2,400 Unitarian Universalist activists from 27 UU congregations and their allies. I am also speaking on behalf of the Michigan Interfaith Reproductive Justice Coalition, a group that includes individuals from eight faith related groups: Jewish, United Church of Christ, Episcopal, Catholic, Lutheran, Unitarian Universalist; Presbyterian; and Muslim.

Unitarian Universalists share with other faiths a core belief in the inherent dignity of each person. We also share with other faith groups the belief that women should have the right to express their conscience when making decisions about their pregnancies. No woman should be coerced into any decisions concerning her pregnancy. All reproductive decisions should be freely made.

HB 4787 and 4830 selectively claim to protect women from coercion to have an abortion. However, these bills do not address domestic violence and say nothing about protecting a women who may be coerced to get pregnant.

If the Michigan legislature truly cares about helping victims of domestic violence and reproductive coercion, they would look at policies that address all forms of coercion, not just coercive abortions. This legislation is redundant and unnecessary. Michigan's existing consent law already mandates that a women's consent to an abortion must be "given freely without coercion".

It's our view that it is in the best interests of women is to give them full opportunities to maintain their dignity. This means that women should be allowed to fully exercise their conscience about their reproductive choices. These bills, which claim to protect women, appear to impede women from getting information they need to make wise decisions. These bills appear to seek to impose one set of religious beliefs upon all of Michigan's women.

Based on the religious principles of our interfaith coalition and the importance of preserving the freedom for women to choose their own reproductive health decisions, I urge members of the House Criminal Justice Committee to vote NO on HB's 4787 and 4788.

For more information, contact Randy Block at 248-549-5170.